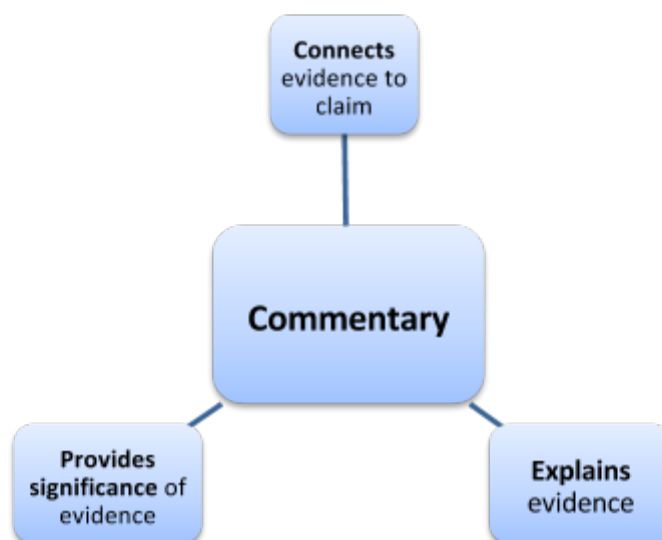


DEVELOPING REASONING - THE ANALYTICAL TOOLBOX

Commentary Anchor Chart



Questions for Writing Commentary – Ask Yourself:

- **What** do I need to make sure the reader understands about this evidence? (Re-explain the evidence.)
- **Why** is this evidence especially important?
- **How** does it prove and support the claim?

The Importance of BECAUSE

“Because” is a word that tells a reader they are about to hear an explanation. It signals **significance** and **relationship**. It’s an effective word to use when writing commentary. Take a look:

- These statistics are important **because** they point to the positive effects school uniforms can have on attendance, behavior, and academic achievement.
- School decision-makers must pay attention to such experiences **because** they prove that school uniforms will decrease the levels of violence and bullying.

Strong Commentary Verbs

from *Rules for Writers* by Diana Hacker

Use these verbs when writing commentary. Note the two verbs underlined in the sentences above.

acknowledges	compares	insists	claims
adds	confirms	notes	underscores
admits	declares	observes	exemplifies
agrees	denies	points out	implies
argues	emphasizes	rejects	proves
asserts	highlights	reports	exhibits
believes	illustrates	responds	suggests

Commentary Examples & Practice

Instruction: Underline the strong commentary verbs and circle instances of the word “because.”

Debatable Claim: School uniforms improve academic achievement and attendance.

#1

Factual Evidence: According to a University of Houston study of a large urban school district in the southwest, when schools adopted uniforms, middle and high school students’ attendance and academic achievement improved, especially girl students. (Gentile and Imberman)

Commentary: This study is significant because it illustrates how much dress and fashion affects academic achievement for girls. When students have to wear uniforms, and fashion is no longer an issue, girls’ school performance improves. The study shows a direct relationship between clothes and grades, proving that uniforms are a positive choice.

#2

Anecdotal Evidence: I have a friend who felt so much social pressure to wear certain kinds of clothes that she couldn’t afford, that sometimes she wouldn’t come to school at all. The clothes she owned embarrassed her. But now that we all wear uniforms, you can’t really tell whose parents have money and whose don’t, so there isn’t so much pressure around fashion at school. We can focus on our work instead. My friend doesn’t skip school nearly as much as she used to.

Commentary: This example highlights how much clothing and social status can affect students’ behavior and attendance at school. This is significant because the fact that my friend came to school more regularly once we had to wear uniforms confirms how much uniforms impact student attendance, which directly affects learning.

You Try!

Debatable Claim: School uniforms improve academic achievement and attendance.

Factual Evidence: A study conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals showed that 67% of principals of schools with a uniform policy in place saw an improvement in students’ classroom concentration. (NAESP)

Your Commentary: *don’t forget to use those strong commentary verbs!*
(re-explain the facts)

(tell what’s important about them)

(explain how this evidence proves and supports the claim)

PARAPHRASE x3

Goal: to dispel the idea that the meanings of words are self evident.

1. Paraphrase another writer's claim, counterclaim, or a key piece of evidence that supports their own claim or subclaim. Do not only use synonyms, but change the structure of the sentence(s) in order to open up the possible meanings of the words.

2. Paraphrase the same passage two more times, this time replacing all key words with new words. Your language should go for more than the gist of the sentence(s) but attempt to fully reexplain the sentence(s). This will help with reinterpretation.

3. Reread the original passage and reflect in writing on what you now understand about it given your paraphrasing work. This reflection is foundational reasoning work.

NOTICE & FOCUS

Goal: to deepen thinking about evidence

1. Notice Repeatedly answer the question “**what do you notice?**” about an idea, article or evidence set rather than making evaluative statements (“what you like/dislike”) or analytical statements (“what does this mean). The question “what do you notice?” leads to deeper observation. Be sure to cite specific examples rather than making general claims.

2. Focus – Rank the details you have chosen from most to least INTERESTING (as opposed to those you like or dislike).

Finish the following statements to determine the order:

What is most interesting about the argument/text/evidence is
_____. (An interesting detail might create questions rather than answer them)

What is most strange about the argument/text/evidence is
_____. (A strange detail might defamiliarize something that we thought we understood so that we see it in a new light.)

What is most revealing about the argument/text/evidence is _____ . (A revealing detail might give you a sense that there is greater meaning behind what you observe.)

3. Notice Explain why the three items you selected struck you as the most significant. This is your chance to make **interpretive** leaps about the meaning of what you found most interesting through freewriting and making connections.

4. Focus Looking over your responses, consider how the statements you have made relate to one another. How does what is strange relate to what is interesting? Underline parts that connect and relate and freewrite about the relationship.

5. Notice Again – Go back to your subject and see what else you notice now that you have some ideas about meaning. What else strikes you as revealing?

10 to 1

Goal: to spend more time investigating each piece of evidence because it is better to have 10 ideas about 1 piece of evidence, than to have only one simple idea about 10 pieces of evidence

1. Choose one major piece of evidence from your argument to analyze. Make it a significant piece.
2. Come up with 10 possible interpretations of this evidence. What are the different meanings that it suggests?
3. Choosing just a few of your interpretations, ask yourself So What? What is the implication of this idea?
4. Repeat this exercise using another piece of evidence, then see if you can find connections between your first list and your second list.
5. Form a working claim statement that encompasses your observations, interpretations and implications.
6. Use the writing you did about the implications of this idea to tie your claim statement to the evidence you are discussing.

TELESCOPE WRITING

Goal: to deepen thinking about one idea or piece of evidence while making connections between ideas to develop a line of reasoning

1. **Freewrite** on your initial claim, idea or piece of evidence you wish to examine. Write at least a page. 2. **Read and reread** what you have written. On the second reading, underline the sentence or set of

sentences that seem the most important, complex or interesting to you.

3. **Copy those sentences** onto the top of a fresh page. Freewrite for a full page about why these sentences are so important, complex, or interesting. What do they reveal? What questions do they raise? What other ideas do they connect to?

4. **Repeat** the process in steps 2 and 3 as many times as you feel compelled to.

5. When you are finished, **reread all the sentences you underlined**, noticing the connections between them and how they might point to a line of reasoning you wish to develop further.